

No

15 #

STRICTURES

UPON

THE POLITICAL PARTIES

IN THE CITY OF

EDINBURGH:

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TOGETHER WITH

A STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATED CIRCUMSTANCES AND FACTS,

WHICH MERIT THE PARTICULAR AND IMMEDIATE ATTENTION, BOTH OF THE HONOURABLE MAGISTRATES, AND ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THAT CITY.

By a Friend to the Public.

HE THAT HEARKENETH UNTO COUNSEL, IS WISE.



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EDINBURGH.

1800.

STREET

THE POLITICAL PART

EDINBURGH

COURT OF COMMONS

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

By a Bill to the



PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD

15

STRICTURES, &c.

THOMAS SMITH, Esq. late one of the Bailies of Edinburgh, thought proper, some time ago, to lay before the public, certain statements respecting the political arrangements and revenue of that City, which are highly interesting, and have engaged a considerable share of attention.

In consequence of Mr. Smith's Address, several publications have appeared, evidently written by persons possessed of very little information upon the subject; and it has been particularly unfortunate, that the public has suffered their attention to be diverted, by these writers, from the great general principles, and from the momentous and interesting facts, which have been brought to view, and allowed themselves to be engaged in the disgusting investigation of City politics, and the uninteresting scramble of individuals for power. In a City where so many of the inhabitants are gentlemen of intelligent and independent minds, it is truly astonishing to observe how easily they have suffered themselves in this manner to be imposed upon, and thereby to appear in a character no higher than that of the partizans of the different contending parties; whilst, in the mean time, the public interest lies exposed, either to the injuries of negligence or ignorance, or to the greater hazard of the unwarrantable designs of unprincipled men.

Had I no higher character to bear, no more important object in view, I never should have obtruded myself upon the public. The parties are to me perfectly indifferent. From no arrangement in the Magistracy of the City can I receive the smallest emolument. I am accountable to no man for my opinions: I endeavour, upon every subject, to form them with exactness and impartiality; and that more from facts which have happened, and come under my knowledge, than from speculations into futurity.

My intention upon the present occasion is, from a candid display of facts, with which I am perfectly acquainted, to disengage the intelligent public from the contest of parties, and fix their attention upon the real interests of the community; and in doing so, I shall speak freely of the principles, politics and conduct of both parties: and, I am afraid, it will be impossible for me to avoid animadverting with some degree of severity upon them all.

But, before I proceed farther, I must set at rest the hearts of all parties from any fears of attack from my pen upon private personal character. *I will search no deeper than parties have laid themselves open to public view*, nor will I enter into any subject which does not concern the public; but upon these, parties may rest themselves assured, I will treat them freely. I scorn the man who could borrow the poignard even of a Junius, though it were sharp and pointed as the keenest malice. I would despise him, who, disguised under the cloak of an Old Magistrate, screened from the possibility of detection, could deliberately thrust his dagger into the bosom even of a villain. But if he should thus assassinate the private character of a man of respectability and honour, in that case I should account him much worse than contemptible. If he was robed in the gown of the first magistrate of Scotland; if he sat president in the most respectable seminary of learning upon earth; if I even had

heard him, in the most glowing language of truth and charity, display the beauty and excellence of pure benevolence ; with such a man, my heart must be eternally at war. The music of language, the glow of imagination, the correct and manly vigour of nervous eloquence, the eloquence even of a Junius, could not for a moment fascinate my mind to make me admire, much less to approve, the dextrous secret stab : and I am persuaded, that there is not one good-hearted man in Edinburgh, upon whatever side he may have arranged himself, who has been pleased with the spirit displayed by the Old Magistrate. But though the poor old man has attempted twice to walk upon crutches, purloined from Junius, he is now forgotten. *The lion's skin could not hide the ears of the ass.*

I now proceed to my subject, and shall delineate the principles of the parties, in as far as they have thought proper to disclose them. The first, and most prominent, and praiseworthy, which seems universal to them all, is, the principle of loyalty and attachment to the person of our most gracious Sovereign, and to the legal, free and happy Constitution of the British Government. This is undoubtedly a first and most necessary principle in every Magistrate : in this the character ought to be prominent and unequivocal ; *for Magistrates ought to be patriots* ; and men may give it what name they please, but this allegiance to the Constitution is the purest patriotism ; and that this has been steadily the character, that these have been the unequivocal sentiments of both parties, is beyond a doubt. I would not have thought it necessary to have taken notice of this, if some persons had not made it a pretence to call in question the loyalty of Sir James Stirling, Mr. Smith, and their friends ; when, in some late political arrangements, they had thought proper to introduce into the Council, persons who were generally supposed attached to schemes of wild reform,

which had been first suggested to them by those ungovernable spirits who wished to emulate, in Britain, *the tremendous, the wretched liberty of France*. This circumstance appeared indeed suspicious, and occasioned much animadversion in the City upon that part of the conduct of their rulers; and it was not sustained as a sufficient apology for Sir James Stirling and his friends, that the persons thus *taken from the crew*, as it is now called, *were innocent shadows*, useless men, without influence, without powers, and incapable even of mischief; for it was suspected, *or rather it was said*, by their opponents, that this was only an experiment, a trial of what the Town would submit to; for some of these very persons were known to have attempted a political character, and, at meetings held in South Bridge Street, *not esteemed the most loyal*, they were heard roaring for reform. Some of them had minds expanded with ambition;—witness the *preses* and *croupier* of that distinguished company of patriots who celebrated the anniversary of the glorious Revolution of France. I confess, it was not till after much reflection, that I could set my mind at ease, when I saw *such persons* made sharers in the power and confidence of the Chief Magistrate and his select friends; and I became the more alarmed when I was informed, that the guardians of our peace and honour, the Royal Edinburgh Volunteers, were for a long time afraid either of the power or the treachery of these persons, and therefore refused to put arms into their hands, or to enrol them in their faithful band. But I am old enough to remember, when the glorious Earl of Chatham took by the hand the rebels from the North, and, clothing them in the forbidden garb of ancient Caledonians, led them forth the champions of the British rights. Their native genius for war, animated by the spirit of that unconquerable Minister, poured destruction upon our enemies; and they returned to their country, having their heads co-

vered with the wreath of victory, and their hearts filled with *loyalty, even to a passion.*

Any person may apply with ease the idea which this suggests to the present case ; and though my application of it may be thought by some abundantly ludicrous, I have no doubt that the intention was precisely the same in both cases ; for it is scarcely to be questioned, that, if you will give a Democrat a pension or a place, or make him a Magistrate of Edinburgh, he will from that instant become a good and loyal subject. I am certain it has turned out exactly so in the present instance ; for the preses, the croupier, and others above alluded to, are, at this moment, *with the full approbation of his Majesty's Ministers*, joined in the government of that City, and are heard as loud in the cry of loyalty as if they were *actually soldiers* : they now profess themselves full of alarm for the plots and combinations of the crew they have left : they express the most violent apprehensions, lest, *by removing his Majesty's Ministers,** the Government of Great Britain should be overturned. As, therefore, the expedient for the conversion of these gentlemen, devised by Sir James Stirling and Mr. Smith, has been so very successful, I declare myself now completely satisfied, and I hope every person is satisfied, that the party had no treacherous design when they first introduced them into the Council. This certainly must be allowed, unless any man will dare to say that all the present Magistrates have joined in the conspiracy, as they have now taken into their bosoms *these redoubtable champions of reform.* But, to be serious, I am perfectly assured, that there is not in Scotland, a single person more perfectly attached from principle to the person of our Royal Sovereign, and the happy Constitution of this Country, than Sir James Stirling, Mr. Thomas Smith, and

* This was the object of a petition sent some time ago from Edinburgh, by a certain description of persons.

the other gentlemen with whom they have formed connections. The Town of Edinburgh know this; the present Magistrates know it well; every person who knows any thing about the matter, is convinced of it. I conclude, therefore, that they who have tried to occupy the public mind with contrary impressions, have done it contrary to their own conviction. *This may be political, but it is not honest.*

I have found it more difficult to be satisfied in the next universal principle, which seems equally to have animated all the political parties in Edinburgh, though I have observed that it is held by them all in the highest veneration, as their most powerful principle of conduct, as the principle of their mutual union and confidence, and as the actuating principle of all their politics. The principle which I allude to, is, *their unchangeable attachment, and absolute submission to the Right Honourable Secretary of State, the Representative of the City of Edinburgh in Parliament.* It must be perfectly obvious to every attentive observer, that this principle has taken complete possession of the minds of every one of them: it has occupied all their faculties; it is never allowed to be out of sight for a moment; and, drunk or sober, they are under its absolute command. Now I have been very much at a loss to determine in my own mind, whether this was a moral principle or not; because I had been hitherto accustomed to think, that the arbitrary will of no man could be a certain and uniform good rule of conduct for another: but, upon the most mature reflection, my mind became fully satisfied upon that point.

I know that the Right Honourable Secretary is by nature endowed with great and splendid powers: I had seen these planted upon the fairest soil of good fortune; I had seen them rise to an astonishing height; I had observed them spread forth branches in every direction, and we now behold the Judges and Nobles of the land sitting under their sha-

dow. Now, the very best purpose which can be served by the very best moral principles, is, to direct and regulate the conduct; and nothing can be more obvious than that the Right Honourable Secretary can, even in the most minute matters, direct and regulate the conduct of the Magistrates of Edinburgh, as effectually as it possibly could be done by any principles whatever. It has been observed by moralists, that the great advantage of a man being possessed of good principles is, that they will, when strictly submitted to, conduct him to real honour, to certain profit, and true felicity. I am perfectly satisfied, that there is not a man engaged in the politics of the City of Edinburgh, but would think himself completely assured, that, if the Right Honourable Secretary would take him by the hand, he would, to the extent of his utmost wish, be in the direct road to profit, distinction, and honour; and what more effectually, or better, could he be served, even by the best principles? And, finally, there are many persons who, from a defect either in their heads or hearts, find it extremely difficult to adopt for themselves any uniform principles of conduct: in such a case it is happy for themselves, and for the interests of society in general, that, without troubling themselves about the matter, they should submit to some other person the entire direction of their conduct. I will not take upon me to say, that the Honourable Magistrates who either are or have been, are defective either in their heads or hearts; but universal and long experience has decided, that it has been always advantageous for the City when the Magistrates have been under a direction distinct from and superior to their own; and I am at this time clearly of opinion, that they could not have given themselves up to the guidance of any person who could do it with more dignity or authority, or who could decide for them more pointedly, what was incumbent upon them to do. So that, upon the whole, if the

principle of submission to the Right Honourable Secretary is not a moral principle, it must be confessed to be a *most admirable substitute*; and, all things considered, the best for all parties in the present existing circumstances. I cannot expressly say what men in general may think of it; but as, for Mr. Smith, though he and his party have been represented as inimical to the interests of the Representative of the City, his own declaration will vindicate him with every candid man from any such imputation; for he has said, * “for himself and all his friends, that, if directly or indirectly, drunk or sober, they suffered themselves to harbour an idea contrary to these principles, they must have been, not only knaves, but egregious fools;” and Mr. Dundas himself is so satisfied that the Magistrates and Town Council have no other principle to walk by, that he has repeatedly told them, that the moment when they shall think *they can stand or walk by themselves*, he will quit his hold of them, and suffer the connection betwixt them to be dissolved.

But, setting ridicule aside, there certainly cannot be two opinions, there certainly never has been two opinions, amongst the Magistrates of the Town of Edinburgh, concerning the propriety of maintaining the most intimate and confidential connection betwixt the City and their Right Honourable Representative; and, notwithstanding the industry with which some persons have endeavoured to insinuate the contrary, there is not, there cannot be, an individual who entertains a doubt of the sincere and unchangeable attachment which has been maintained by Sir James Stirling and his friends, to the interests of Mr. Dundas: and he himself has expressly reprobated every such idea; he has publicly declared that he is fully satisfied,

* Smith's Address, p. 22.

*that no party has been formed in Edinburgh inimical to his interests in the City.** To say the contrary, whoever did so, was, therefore, neither honourable nor candid.

No man can deny, in the existing circumstances, that it is advantageous to the community, and to every individual concerned in the government of the City, that they should be entitled to look up to him as their Representative, on account of his senatorial powers, but more especially as their patron, who conducts the stream of favour, honour, and emolument, which flows perpetually from the Crown. If any of the parties had been so stupid as to have been insensible to the honour which has been derived to the City of Edinburgh by their being represented by a gentleman of the first abilities, whose wisdom is so necessary to guide the helm of Government, yet no man will believe that they are so unselfish as not to value the countenance and friendship of that man who, being in the confidence of his Sovereign, has titles, and places, and pensions, at his disposal. I am therefore persuaded, there is not a man of sense in Edinburgh who will not join with me in thinking, that though the attachment and devout submission of all the political parties in Edinburgh to the Right Honourable Representative cannot justly be said to be a purely moral impression, or a purely disinterested sentiment, yet that it has been, and at present is, an universal fixed political principle, equally impressive and commanding: for, whatever defects may be found in political characters, they will never be found defective in attachment to their own interest.

I confess, however, after all, it has struck me strongly, and unfortunately it may have made a similar impression upon some independent minds *not in the Magistracy*, that this attachment and submission of the Edinburgh Magi-

* Mr. Dundas's Letter.

strates may, and has been sometimes carried too far. Indeed, I felt somewhat awkwardly when I read Sir James Stirling's letter from Harrowgate, addressed to Mr. Dundas, published in Mr. Smith's Appendix, wherein it is intimated to have been a general practice to consult the Right Honourable Secretary, upon the formation and arrangement of the leets of the Corporations upon the election of their Deacons. I had somehow formed such a sublime idea of his character, and the importance of his time and attention to the interests of the community at large, that I thought it impossible that he could either find leisure or inclination to stoop to such minute and inferior objects: I thought it impossible he should have considered it necessary to draw the reins of his government so tight, that the multitude of the tradesmen in Edinburgh could not be left to themselves to choose their Deacons, insensible to such a yoke. I thought it impossible, that, knowing, *as he certainly did know*, how much the whole City is devoted to his interests, he would have interfered in the scramble of individuals for power, especially when he must have been sensible that the only contention amongst them was, *who should serve him most devoutly*. In all this, I found myself interested for the honour of the Representative, the dignity of the Rulers, and the independence of the City. I may have been mistaken; but all I shall say in the conclusion is, that if such things are, (for the credit of all parties) *such things ought never to be told*; for the governors of a country ought never to appear insignificant—ought never to be held up to derision.*

Whilst I have been canvassing the nature and effects of

* I felt equal interest at what follows. In some stages of the late election, Mr. Smith, it seems, protested against the procedure of the Council, and threatened a reduction on the ground of unconstitutional influence being exerted; and I find from the Council records, that Counsellor Paterson

the principle above mentioned, I think I have discovered (and I am persuaded many of my readers have been equally acute to discover) another principle which has inspired every individual engaged in the politics of Edinburgh; and that is, *a principle of selfishness*. This is by many supposed to be a principle inherent in human nature, which discovers itself in every movement of the soul. But if this is the case, which I hope it is not, I cannot devise a reason why every person, especially politicians, should be ashamed to avow it; and yet we every day observe them exerting the

"Adhered to the protests of Old Bailie Smith, for the following, among other reasons:—

1st, "On account of the message which was delivered to the Lord Provost by Major Hope, in presence of Bailie Eyre, Bailie Spankie, Bailie Hill, and Mr. Paterfon, stating, that the Lord Advocate was surprised a division of thirteen to twelve should have taken place in the Council, without the Lord Provost having waited on him, to acquaint him of it; but that two of the minority had waited upon the Lord Advocate with the information: That he, Major Hope, was desired by the Lord Advocate to acquaint the Lord Provost, that the Lord Advocate had made up a list of six Deacons for Council Deacons, whom he reckoned friendly to the interest of Mr. Dundas; that the Lord Advocate expected the friends of Mr. Dundas would vote that list, and *that their names would be communicated in due time*: That Bailie Hill said, he had given his hand to the Lord Advocate to vote that list; at the same time, on being asked by the Lord Provost, *declared he did not know their names*."

2d, "That he conceives this message to have been not only a high indignity to the Chair of the City, but also, through the Chair, to the Citizens of Edinburgh, an unprecedented violation of the freedom of election, and contrary to the express desire of Mr. Dundas himself, in supporting the minority in opposition to the Chair; without which support, the Chair would, in all probability, have carried the subsequent steps of the election unanimously, and agreeably to the wishes expressed by Mr. Dundas to the Lord Provost."

* "And is indeed the self same case,

"With theirs that swore *et-ceteras*."

HUDIB.

greatest industry to deny or conceal its influence. For this purpose, they dress it out *as a lovely virtue*, and give it a variety of specious names, appropriate to Virtue itself: By some it is called Prudence; by some, Economy; by some, Patriotism; and by the politicians in Edinburgh, it may possibly pass current, and be approved, under the designation of a *disinterested attachment to Mr. Dundas, and the family of Arncliffe*. But it is at all times very unfortunate when such pretences are unveiled, as it leads to disagreeable reflections; for, however indulgent a man may be to his own passion of self-love, he is very little disposed to give the same indulgence in that particular even to his nearest friends. Could such a thing be supposed to happen, it would be, for example, very disagreeable for a gentleman sincerely attached to the Right Honourable Secretary, to hear himself calumniated, as if his regard to that gentleman had originated and increased with the numbers of French prisoners confined in the Castle; for, after all, it could only in justice have been said, that these prisoners must have a Commissary to provide them in necessaries, and that this gentleman wished to continue in that humane and charitable office.* It must have been equally disagreeable for another to have it told of him, that he very possibly might have continued to rank and vote with his former friends, if it had not been in contemplation to establish a new Stamp Office in Edinburgh, as if that event alone had *stamped the image of Mr. Dundas upon his heart*. And it would have wrung the affectionate, the delicate, the

* It has been said, but I can scarcely credit the report, that in the year 1798, a gentleman, not now in Council, found his virtue strengthened by an obligation from Sir James Stirling, or his friends, which secured to him an equivalent if he should be deprived of his truly Christian employment; and that, having been refused a similar security at last elections, he found it on the other side.

susceptible heart of the Chamberlain, had it even been suspected of him, that his unremitting active zeal for the interests of the City, and their Right Honourable Representative, had an origin no more sublime than the desire he had to secure himself in his office; and that the glorious and *interesting confusion* in the revenues of the City might continue for ever. All this would indeed be very disagreeable when it happened: but such things cannot always be helped; for, let wise men cover themselves the best way they can, the busy world, who always intermeddle with matters in which they have no concern; though they cannot guess at all the truth, will often guess very near it.

I give great credit to the author of the *Strictures upon the late political conduct of Bailie Smith*, who has so sagaciously unveiled the whole of his pretence to merit, from a superior degree of attention to the interests of the City revenues. This gentleman has let us into the secret: he tells us, that Mr. Smith had resolved in his own mind one day to become Lord Provost, and likewise Chamberlain, and to unite in himself (as most worthy and most capable) all the offices connected with the City revenue, and to appropriate all the profits, *known and unknown, which might arise from their righteous administration*; for all which he was to remunerate the City, by procuring for them Books of Accounts new-bound and titled on the back, *Journal, Leger, &c.* and by positively refraining in his public capacity from drinking claret. I am perfectly convinced, this wise author has guessed very near the truth, and that Mr. Smith, lying in his bed of a morning, has certainly indulged himself in such reveries; and I wish this sensible author had proceeded farther in his guesses; for if the truth were known, I am persuaded that every politician in the Town Council, *and they are all politicians*, indulges himself in similar dreams. It would be abundantly amusing, if they could all be

brought to an honest confession; we might then clearly discover the different ties by which their *sincere affections* to Mr. Dundas have been engaged.

But though I can amuse myself with the hopes and disappointments of political selfishness, I cannot at any time, without sincere concern and some indignation, discover any gentleman, though it were to serve the most important political purpose, wantonly making use of the name of any other, to his dishonour. It appears from Mr. Smith's publication, that there are several objects of great importance to the City, all requiring Parliamentary interference; and Mr. Smith states,* that on occasion of the last elections, in order to gain their object, certain individuals had insinuated to the members of Council, that they could assure them that these objects could be procured through the medium of Mr. Dundas, *if his wishes respecting the elections were but complied with; but not otherwise.* I do not pretend to decide upon the importance, the justice or injustice, of the measures proposed. But for any person to pretend to pledge himself, if the elections should be carried in a particular way, that Mr. Dundas, in his capacity as *Member of Parliament*, would exert himself to secure these objects, independent of the merits of the case, or that, upon a contrary event, he would oppose the measures proposed by the City, would be, in my apprehension, the grossest insult which could be offered to the Right Honourable Secretary, or to any gentleman of integrity, and must be scouted with indignation by every friend of Mr. Dundas. If the measures proposed are right, they will necessarily meet with Mr. Dundas's support; but if they are improper or unjust, though they were proposed to him by his very best friends, he must, he certainly would, oppose them. A Member of the British Parliament, sitting with

* Address, p. 25.

an independant mind, to decide upon the right and wrong of every subject which shall come before the House, is a character greater than that of the first minister of the greatest potentate on earth. Mr. Dundas assuredly knows; and feels this dignity, and from no selfish consideration can he be ever persuaded to thank the man, who, to serve any purpose, shall sport the idea that he could betray his trust and falsify his honour. Though, therefore, I have said, that a principle of selfishness may possibly be discovered, shaded under various forms, amongst the politicians of Edinburgh, far be it from me to suppose it possible, that a principle so ignoble has ever tainted the mind of the Right Honourable Secretary of State.

I have thus traced the principles and political sentiments of parties, and I have found them thus far in all to be precisely the same; but I have, upon a farther review of the subject, been led to observe a phenomenon in the political hemisphere of Edinburgh, which is certainly uncommon, and somehow unaccountable; for I find that this unity, this sameness of mind, in their leading and most essential principles, has not continued to be a bond of affection, or of federal union amongst the individuals. Here Mr. Smith takes a high tone, and exhibits himself in a very conspicuous point of view; he has said of himself, that he has been steady to his party, unchangeable in his engagements, and tenacious of his word. This bold assumption to himself of principle and character, is so extraordinary, that I am disposed to inquire, first, if it is really true? and then, if it be true, if he has been really wise in doing so?

I take it, that a party in the management of City politics, is a very simple structure: it consists of nothing more than a combination of certain persons who positively promise and engage to stand by and support each other in the administration of every thing respecting the Community, in the go-

vernment of which they either have, or wish to have a concern. Now, by the particular set or constitution of the City of Edinburgh; a party thus connected and once in power, if faithful to each other, may continue and retain their influence for ever. In this point of view, steadiness to a party is essential to its members, and will therefore be reckoned amongst politicians, the first of political virtues. To secure this, therefore, when any new man is proposed to be introduced into the Council, the Lord Provost makes him a visit, and takes him bound to the party, previous to his admission: but though, for obvious reasons, this may, by politicians, be styled an essential virtue, I am afraid, when the matter is calmly considered, there will be found a material distinction betwixt steadiness to a leader or party, and steadiness to virtuous principles; for though it is possible they may be united, that union does not always take place, and therefore the strictest party-man is not always the man of most sterling honesty; for if that were the case, a party of robbers, faithful to each other, might often claim the character. Mr. Smith's pretensions must therefore be canvassed with caution.

I find he was, above four years ago, introduced into the Council by Sir James Stirling, and that in every step of his progress, he was led forward by Sir James. The party of Sir James Stirling has, therefore, been invariably the party of Mr. Thomas Smith; he has not relinquished it since the first moment of his political existence. Now, I never have heard even any of his most violent opposers allege against him, that his political attachments have ever induced him to relinquish the plain principles of honour and truth. He has told us, that he has been steady to Sir James, and I have never been told that Sir James had deserted his friends; I have not heard it alleged, that he has altered the plan of his administration; I have not

found that he, in any particular, had changed his political principles or attachments ; I have not found that he had engendered discontent, by refusing favours, when he possessed the power to bestow them, or that he had ever falsified his promises and engagements, when he had once pledged himself. Indeed the whole party who have remained attached to him, aver, and I have not heard it contradicted, that both he and all of them, have, in every particular, continued uniformly the same. If this then is the case, the question naturally occurs, *Why are Provost Stirling and his friends in the minority ?* There must have been somewhere a dereliction from promise, from party covenant, if not from principle ; for if all had remained true to their party, according to Mr. Smith's idea of faithfulness, they could not have sunk into a minority ; and if this statement be just, the *present* Magistrates and Town Council must have very different ideas of the virtue of steadiness to a party, from those entertained by Mr. Smith ; and doubtless they have found out the most solid and satisfying reasons for *deserting their old friends, and their old engagements, and for forming new friends, a new party, and new engagements.* But as from none of the publications which I have read, nor from any facts which have come to my knowledge, have I been able to discover what those *solid and satisfactory reasons were*, I must rest my faith in their sufficiency, upon the opinion I entertain of the wisdom and honour of the present rulers.

But there are two sorts of men to whom I cannot be so easily persuaded to afford indulgence. The first is, that man who employs all his art and influence to seduce another from his engagements, after he has been fully assured that those engagements were entered into fairly and unequivocally. Political morality, however, is so distinguished from every other code of justice and honour, that

I am afraid (having never been initiated) when I speak upon the subject, I shall be considered as being ignorant, and of a contracted and illiberal mind; but speaking as I feel, and I think I feel as a man of honour ought to do, I do not think there can exist any reason so strong, for one gentleman blowing out the brains of another, as that of his soliciting him to violate his promise, knowing it to be positively engaged, which is, in other words *soliciting him to become what he might not choose to profess*. Indeed, so much am I a novice in these matters, that if I ever had been employed to canvass a borough or a corporation, the first question I should have thought of asking the person I meant to solicit, would have been, *if, or not, he was engaged? for were I to solicit to vice, I should deem myself a partner with the vicious* *. That there have been any such in the present Magistracy, or that any person has in this manner interested himself in their establishment, is more than I am *willing to believe*; but if there have been no tempters, what must I think of those wretched men of the second description, who, without even being solicited or tempted, have *forsaken their party, and violated their promises most solemnly pledged*? That there have been *such*, I am entitled to assert; for in the 62d page of Mr. Smith's publication, it is said, and has not been contradicted, even in the pamphlet published by authority, "that certain individuals who had voted against us (that is, against Sir James Stirling and his friends), in the late divisions, were bound by every tie of honour (in so far as the solemn pledge of their words, and giving of their hands, before witnesses, could be understood to bind them), to vote along with us; that these gentlemen nevertheless had

* I am informed, that it is the practice, when a man undertakes a political canvass, to suppose every man disengaged, until he tells him the contrary; under which belief, surely, nothing improper can be imputed to him.

"thrown off their honourable obligations." It is true, that in that publication their names have not been mentioned, neither shall they be now mentioned by me ; but in this I am decided, that though such men have been made use of by the gentlemen presently in power, the inbred sentiments of honour which these gentlemen possess, must have revolted against their conduct ; these gentlemen dare not, they cannot, they will not trust the individuals who have deserted one standard and fled to another ; for as they wish their power to be established upon honourable principles, they will scorn to take assistance but from honourable men. If such men were to become the rulers in the City of Edinburgh, the Right Honourable Secretary would do well speedily to renounce his connection with it, for it would be no longer honourable for him to continue its Representative ; the citizens would no longer have to boast of Caledonian faith, and good men would no longer think it an honour to become Magistrates, for, by the musty precepts of ancient religion and philosophy, every such conduct has been, and ever will be completely reprobated.

It may be here alleged, that I have departed from the rule I at the beginning laid down to myself, which was, to avoid private personalities ; but let it be remembered, I then said, that *I would search no deeper, than parties have laid themselves open to the public view.* Now, the dereliction of these men from their faith, has been expressly asserted, it is declared to have been *witnessed*, and though they had the fairest opportunity in the publication by authority, *they have not contradicted it.* It is impossible, therefore, not to give credit to this allegation, and I must have been a traitor to the cause of honour and truth, if I could have passed the circumstance without the most pointed reprehension ; for I do not know one point of French principles or morals, more dangerous and detestable, than that which I

am afraid is not wholly French ; I mean, that of proposing one rule of moral justice, rectitude, and truth, for the politician, and another for the man.

I have hitherto been looking into the discoveries which have been made by the dissention among the rulers of the City of Edinburgh, as to the principles and politics by which they seem to have been governed ; and I must confess, the view which by this has been given of them, is neither very comfortable for the present, nor promising for the future ; but we shall now try if we can obtain greater satisfaction from an investigation into their conduct.

Now, though Mr. Thomas Smith has occupied only an inferior situation in the Magistracy, yet as he has alleged that the Lord Provost, and some other very respectable gentlemen, have always gone along with him, but more especially, because he has exhibited himself in the bold, but unpopular character of reformer, and because I always entertain a particular jealousy of such characters, I shall commence with him. He shall be fairly, though severely, tried ; and I am sorry to be obliged, at the beginning, to say, that even out of his own mouth I must condemn him.

The opinion which the world seemed to have formed respecting him was, that he was a man of abilities, or what is called *clever*, and the very little intercourse which I have had with him, had led me to entertain the same opinion ; but since the Magistrates of Edinburgh (who certainly had good access to be well informed) have, by authority, decided the contrary, I have given up that point entirely, and I now find, that the Magistrates had good reason for their opinions respecting him.

By Mr. Smith's own statement, it appears, that when he was first introduced into the Council by Sir James Stirling, instead of discovering that elevated genius which is capable of great affairs, instead of forming ideas of great and public utility,

the moment he entered upon his office, he betrayed a mind narrow and contracted by an education in a counting-house. The first object, as he himself tells us, which engaged his attention, was the revenues of the City; and the second was, how they might be methodized with mercantile exactness. This indeed displayed a genius fit to become a clerk or an accountant, but by no means did he display a *Magisterial capacity*. The next thing in which we find him engaged was, in conjunction with Mr. Walter Wood, in the midst of strong opposition, securing the office of City Chamberlain to Deacon Convener Thomas Hay. Now, had he been capable of forming a clear apprehension of men's characters, he must have at once been sensible, that of all men Mr. Hay was the most unfit for that office. Had Mr. Smith attended to Mr. Hay's real circumstances, he would have considered him as he had been educated, a surgeon, and possibly very capable in his line, but as ignorant of accounts as if he had been a gentleman. If he had attended to his public conduct, he must have known him to have been a roaring, bustling, Deacon Convener, and sufficiently qualified to ride in the storm of election; but that these qualifications, though in themselves *extremely useful*, were diametrically opposite to the calm, deliberate, plodding, duties of a proper Chamberlain.—Where then were all Mr. Smith's abilities when he did not discover these things? He certainly might have known that Mr. Hay's experience at that time, in accounts, did not exceed the keeping of an apothecary's day-book. I by no means desire to depreciate Mr. Hay's convivial talents in a mason lodge, or his professional ones in the mystery of bolus, amputation, and tooth-drawing; but we must perceive that these are very different from the qualities necessary for a Chamberlain, unless we are as simple

"As he who took the doctor's bill

"And swallow'd it instead o' th' pill."

It appears plainly from Mr. Smith's after conduct, that he became soon sensible of the error he had committed. He quickly perceived, that though Mr. Hay had obtained the office of Chamberlain, he still retained the qualities and inclinations appropriate to an intriguing Convener. Mr. Smith was evidently alarmed at this, and he considered it as immediately necessary to take measures to prevent the consequences. But if he discovered no abilities in the election he had made, he manifested still less in the remedies which he applied: for the first thing he did upon that occasion was, to *counteract the course of nature*, by a solemn Act of Council, which prohibited the Chamberlain from intermeddling with the politics of the City! Did he think it possible that Mr. Hay, with his restless turn of mind, should sit in the midst of Bailies and Counsellors, and Deacons, men all involved in the very depth of politics, and at the same time not wish to mix in the profound mysteries? Was it possible for him to attend their feasts, and drink their wine, and yet hold his tongue? Was it possible for him to think that he could render himself necessary or useful to any party, and yet preserve himself from engagements? Mr. Smith should have known better than to have pretended, by *reducing that officer to submission, to convince him that he was a servant of the City*. From the moment I heard that this Act of Council was passed, I determined in my own mind, that the party who had framed it, had, by it, fixed Mr. Hay, their active, persevering, and irreconcilable enemy. I saw this enmity rivetted by the resolution of making the election of a Chamberlain annual. I saw its inveteracy rendered unbounded, by demanding from him such large securities to ensure the faithful discharge of his duty. I considered it as rendered irreconcilable when, by an act of Council, the emoluments of the office of Chamberlain were confined within the narrow bounds of a fixed salary.

All these consequences were obvious ; and yet Mr. Smith, who moved or concurred in these measures, was reckoned a man of abilities !

It is very true, that gentlemen unconnected with politics, have taken the liberty to think, that it is very insolent in the servant of any court to take upon him to attempt to rule, or even direct, his masters. They have gone so far also, as to approve of the idea, that a man who had no personal capital, when intrusted with extensive money transactions, should give security for his intromissions to his employer ; and they have even said, that it was more wise to define, by a settled salary, the profits of the City Chamberlain, than to permit him to draw upon the public funds, or to retain sums in his own hand, according to the idea which he himself might form of the importance of his services. Many disinterested persons have thought that all this was right ; and possibly it was so : but that is not the present question ; for the question is, Did Mr. Smith and his friends act in this instance like gentlemen of abilities ? were they wise and good politicians in these enactments ? Consult the event, and the question need not be put twice.

But there is another part of the conduct of Mr. Smith and his party, which appears in a point of view still more ludicrous. After he told the public, that the funds of the City were in extreme disorder, insomuch that their expenditure greatly exceeded their receipt, and that, without thorough and effectual reform, they would verge fast into a state of bankruptcy : after he had told, that their books appeared perfectly incomprehensible, not to himself only, but to every person with whom he had communicated upon the subject ; that neither the Lord Provost, nor any of the Magistrates, nor their clerks, understood them, and that Mr. Hay's opinion of them was, that they were never intended

to be understood:—after having informed us of all this, he then with great gravity tells us, that he seriously applied to, and insisted that the present Chamberlain should undertake the arduous task of explaining and reforming them! Can any person think that he was in earnest, in making such a proposition to a person whom he knew to be, in no respect, wiser than others, and therefore entirely incapable of understanding or reforming what was *incomprehensible*? Let him tell the public, if he would have taken any disciple of Galen from his laboratory, and have made him at once his confidential clerk, to regulate the affairs of his counting-house. There is not a banker in Edinburgh, who would have tried the experiment. Mr. Bruce, the accountant, it seems, said, that he would be a bold man who would attempt the reorm. Mr. Hay certainly is a bold man in certain situations; but it would be ridiculous to expect to find him bold upon arithmetical ground, or that he should have suffered himself to be persuaded, all at once, to have plunged himself into the midst of the chaotic unintelligible mafs. For my own part, I am not surpris'd, that he should have declined, and even peremptorily refused to do so. It has given me no surprife, that he has made up no rental of the New Town feu-duties, or, that he has permitted the arrears due to the Town, to increase so greatly. I am not surpris'd to find him charging the City funds as debtor to himself, in the sum of 10l. though it did appear, from Mr. Bruce's statement, that he was indebted to the City, at the same time, in the sum of 1500l.; * neither is it extraordinary, under his management, that, throughout the year, it should appear the City were indebted to the Banker, 1100l. more than the Chamberlain had charged himself with; for in all this the

* Address, p. 18.

Chamberlain is confessedly innocent, as it originated entirely from his ignorance, or from his not being able to comprehend things not intended to be understood. But the absurdity of the whole is, that Mr. Smith would persuade us, that he was serious in expecting that this was the person who was to accomplish his favourite reform! To every intelligent mind, it must appear perfectly obvious, that, considering the Chamberlain's natural turn of mind, his education, his mercantile incapacity, but especially his particular attachment to confusion, and his resolution against reform, it was ridiculous to expect it from him, absurd to require it, and impossible for him to complete it.

Notwithstanding all this, Mr. Smith has in fact been of considerable service to the community; for he has made discoveries, and been the occasion of the other party making disclosures, which, I believe, neither of them intended; but which may, in the event, turn out very fortunate for the City of Edinburgh: and in what follows, I intend to use them very freely for the public good.

As it is natural rather to take pleasure in giving praise, than in finding fault; when I first heard of Mr. Smith having published his discoveries, I expected that he would have given his fellow-citizens the satisfaction to hear a faithful history of the good and great achievements, which, for a series of years back, have been performed by the respectable Magistrates of Edinburgh; but whether it has been from envy, because, in his own time, nothing of consequence had been done, or whatever has occasioned it, he has been stubbornly silent on this head. At first, I found myself not displeased at Mr. Smith's neglect, as I wished to occupy the ample field: I therefore immediately busied myself in consulting records, &c.; but it is impossible to describe how much I felt mortified, in not having met

with any one period distinguished from another, for upwards of a century, in which the united genius of our respectable Magistrates has ventured to go a step beyond the jog-trot of their forefathers.*

The general diffusion of the light of science, the liberality introduced into religion, the perfection displayed in the fine arts, the astonishing success with which philosophical and mechanical discoveries have been applied for the benefit of society, have not produced any distinguished exertion amongst the Magistracy of Edinburgh during all that period, to promote and secure the morals, the religion, the conveniency, the comfort, or safety of the inhabitants. I cannot, for obvious reasons, here allow of the exception of the New College; though it certainly is the *most splendid modern ruin in Britain*, which has been *finished* at a very great expence, and is the subject of wonder to strangers.

* Here I must except one distinguished character, I mean Provost George Drummond, who has immortalized his name as founder of the Infirmary; the whole plan of which he devised, and, by his industry, procured the funds necessary for its erection; and it is also said of him, that his genius first suggested the plan of the Extended Royalty, which has now become an elegant and beautiful City.

It may possibly be expected, that I should take this occasion to make particular mention of the late Provost Elder; but the truth is, he was much more amiable as a man, than distinguished as a Magistrate; and it was the mildness of his manners, and suavity of his address, which gave popularity to his administration.

Mr. Elder was a good man, and that is better than saying he was great—he was entirely under the direction of his Right Honourable friend; he loved and served his relations better than he did his friends, but he was truly humane and polite to all, and his memory will be respected, whilst gooddeeds shall be revered.

I wish sincerely, that he had not suffered himself to be persuaded by his friends, to leave Peterhead, when Sir James Sirling was last called to the Chair as Chief Magistrate; and, out of respect to his memory; and on that account alone, I regret the imprudence of Crito, in re-publishing the correspondence betwixt him and Mr. Smith, in the year 1798.

But though I have been disappointed in neither finding, from Mr. Smith's publications, nor from my own researches, many things of former times upon which I can congratulate my fellow citizens; yet, as he held himself forth as a reformer, I had no doubt that I should have found a line of conduct chalked out by him for a subsequent administration, which would have fully compensated for all former defects. This certainly required no extraordinary exertions of genius or talents; but as he has done very little to that purpose, I shall take it upon myself, being the principle design of this publication.

I begin with the Civil Policy.

It is within the recollection of many persons, what advantages the Community derived from the exertions of Baron Cockburn, when he was Sheriff of Edinburgh, who, during a long, wise, vigorous, and active Magistracy, contributed so effectually to the security of the inhabitants. Now, it is truly surprising, that with such an example before them, the Magistrates have not been roused to exertion, but have permitted the same ineffectual, sleepy policy still to prevail, which was established some centuries ago. Mr. Smith informs us, that the City Guard stands the Community an expence no less than 1600*l.* annually; and it is confessed by every person, that they are an institution completely useless. In the day-time they sleep in the guard-house; in the night they sleep, or do worse, upon watch; and the inhabitants derive no safety from them. In times of peace they are of no service, and in times of riot they stand as statues: for real business they are of no value, and for parade they are ridiculous. I have not calculated what would be the comparative expence betwixt them, and an increase of peace officers, together with a numerous and well regulated night watch; but of this I am certain, that the difference in effect would be felt to operate so powerfully upon the

public security, that even an additional expence would be well bestowed. But it is believed, that one half of what is now expended would be more than sufficient for the purpose, whilst by them private crimes would either be prevented, or timously discovered: and, in case of riot, if peace officers should not be found sufficient, we enjoy the *particular privilege*, that military barracks are established at both extremities of the City; and, for the suppression of riot, the military power will be always subservient to the command of the Civil Magistrate. A complete change, therefore, in this part of police, would be found profitable in the article of expence, and otherwise essentially beneficial to the City of Edinburgh.

But if the gentlemen in the Government of the City, on account of their being so short a time in office, and their being necessarily engaged in their own private affairs, shall find it impossible to apply themselves to *understand* or to *bring into effect*, schemes of a regular and effectual police, they certainly have it in their power to rectify the practice of their Court in the administration of justice. Not that I can impeach their justice; that does not admit even of suspicion. But, as things are at present carried on, it is truly distressing to have any concern in a process which must be litigated before them; for expensive, vexatious litigation and delays, are so successfully practised, that even the most trifling difference which may happen betwixt a master and a servant, can scarcely be decided in twelve months, after having involved the parties in an expence ten times beyond the value of the subject litigated. As the Magistrates have the example before them of the small debt act, and the consequent procedure before the Justices, which has been found so beneficial to the country, nothing can prevent them, if they shall be so disposed, but that by one act of their respectable authority, they should put an end to this disgraceful traffic. Let them act like men of sense and incorruptible integrity; let them

dismiss their solicitors from their courts; let them constitute themselves a Court of faithful jurymen, to whose verdict the rights of their countrymen have been submitted; let them call parties and witnesses at once, personally before them, and let never the decision be delayed beyond a second hearing. In that case they may sometimes decide rashly, but they would always decide honestly, and they would be very seldom in the wrong, but would merit the thanks of the whole City, and save themselves an infinite deal of trouble. I am persuaded, that it would only require a moment's consideration, for gentlemen who have been, and may soon again become private citizens, to determine to form arrangements, in the benefit of which they themselves, along with the rest of the Community, would share so abundantly. But if the Magistrates of this City have been for so long a period so bewildered in the mazes of politics, that they could find no leisure to pay attention to an object so necessary for the comfort and prosperity of the public, I am doubly sorry to say, that in more important matters they have been led to adopt such measures, that even the moral and religious interests of the City have thereby suffered exceedingly.

It has become fashionable amongst all ranks, to speak even with passion, lamenting the increasing immorality of the lower orders of the people; of the want, or rather the perversion of principle amongst them, and thereby of the facility with which ignorant or ill meaning demagogues have impressed their minds with opinions inimical to sound government, to right morals, and true religion. Even the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland have indulged themselves to speak unwarrantably upon that subject. But when I consider how the matter truly stands, *at least in the City of Edinburgh*, I observe, that the whole conduct of the Magistrates and Town Council, has gradually, but unavoid-

ably, rendered it impossible but that the poorer people shall remain ignorant and immoral: for, notwithstanding the increase of the numbers of the inhabitants, the number of religious teachers upon the establishment continues still the same. Besides, though from the general elegance of modern manners, it has become impossible that good Christians should now sit so close, and crowd upon each other in church, as they did in former times, one or two persons being now reckoned sufficient to occupy a pew; and it is even by some thought a sufficient mark of respect to religion, if a family shall rent a seat, though they should never occupy it at all; notwithstanding all this, there is no more room provided for the inhabitants than they had an hundred years ago, insomuch, that though the churches are almost desolate, the inhabitants cannot be accommodated with seats. And further, the churches are all newly repaired and elegantly ornamented, the seat rents are become *an object of City finance*, by which means their price is raised beyond the reach of the poor, and they are now so elegant, that it would be thought disgraceful to see them occupied by any person with a bad coat upon his back; so that upon the whole, the Magistrates could not have devised any method more effectually to exclude the poor from public worship and instruction; and it is no wonder that, *as the clergy seldom see any of the inferior ranks among their hearers*, they should adapt their sermons to their audience, and forget that they are by any ties connected with the vulgar. What title then have the rich, who rent the seats they never occupy, and thereby exclude the poor from public worship—what right have the Magistrates, who, by imposing heavy rents, yet more effectually exclude them from the means of instruction—what right have any of them to complain of the people as being ignorant and unprincipled? How can they complain of them as giddy and hypocritical, when they see them run-

ning after new teachers? *Hear me, and I will tell you the reason of this apparent unprincipled levity.* It is not so much on account of the principles of these teachers, nor of the attractions of their popular eloquence, that they follow them with such avidity: but they find themselves excluded; they are neglected; they are in this respect in fact despised, and human nature revolts at the usage. Is it wonderful, then, that they should go where they find the doors of the churches laid open to them, where the ministers treat them with attention, and with kindness, and where they express and manifest a sincere concern for their interest and happiness? Will any man of discernment say, that it can be difficult, in such circumstances, for teachers, though possessed of no higher powers than warm hearts, animated with enthusiasm, to gather together the scattered, the neglected, the perishing people?

I would excuse the Magistrates in this matter, if they were compelled by any necessity to bear so hard upon the inferior orders of the people, who constitute eight tenths at least of the inhabitants of Edinburgh; but they cannot say that their funds appropriate for that purpose are too narrow and circumscribed. I have seen by Mr. Smith's statement, that the funds belonging to the ecclesiastical establishment in this City, amount to the great sum of 65981. *per ann.* and there is not more than one half of it at present applied to the appropriate purpose to which it was originally destined. Now, it is surely highly improper to alienate the remainder to any different purposes; and the Magistrates, who are only trustees, cannot, upon any sound principles, excuse the misapplication otherwise than from inadvertency.

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Propaganda fidei Schemes, but I am decidedly of opinion, that a greater benefit could not be done to this City, than to try to make all ranks amongst them good Christians. The higher ranks are already cared for, being under a tuition just suited to them; and I think it but right, that the lower ranks should also be attended to. Now, I apprehend that the ecclesiastical funds are sufficient to *double the number of Churches upon the establishment in Edinburgh; and this ought to be done without delay.* I do not mean that they should be erected at the expence of 20,000l. each, according to the elegant plan of the late Provost Elder, proposed for Charlotte-square; I would propose that they should be erected in proper central situations, at a moderate expence, plain, clean, and commodious. I would propose, that no seat should be let above one shilling, and that with this express provision, that if it shall not be occupied by the time the first psalms shall be concluded, the door of it shall be laid open to the first person who chooses to sit in it, who shall not be disturbed for that day in his possession. And as the Magistrates have been at due pains to provide the other churches with pastors so completely suited to the taste of the higher ranks, they should not now grudge a little trouble to find Clergymen for the proposed establishment, suited to their duties; men of plain, strong sense, of pure principles and sound morals, endowed with benevolent affections, and, if you please, a little *enthusiastically attached to the Christian religion*: Men sincerely desirous to teach and enforce its doctrines, its precepts, and its hopes; who shall be more desirous to do good than to shine: Men who shall not be disgusted at the idea, nor refuse, when occasion requires, with compassionate and benevolent hearts, to enter even into the poorest and dirtiest house in Edinburgh; where they might find opportunity to instruct, to assist, and comfort the veriest wretch that lives, and not disdain to call him brother; and,

finally, men who would have patience with the weak, the obstinate, and even with the vitious; such men would collect the multitude, they would teach them principles, and instil into them the love of virtue. Let not the Magistrates of Edinburgh be alarmed; it never was my intention that the number of the Ministers in Edinburgh should be increased; but my idea was, that the moment any of the present incumbents should sleep with his fathers, *the Church should no longer be collegiate*; for I consider that a Clergyman who is in health, and cannot singly perform the duties of a Church and Parish, is not worthy of the important station which he fills *. Upon the whole, the funds are sufficient, the obligations are peremptory, and the objects are of infinite importance; so that I apprehend it is impossible, that any consideration should ever influence the Magistrates to delay or disappoint the important and interesting scheme; but if the Magistrates should refuse to exert themselves so usefully, the Clergy, who alone by law are entitled to collect the funds, should wrest them from the hands of the City, and like men and Christians, take this work of reformation upon themselves †.

It is hardly to be expected, when great matters have escaped notice, that smaller objects, though of considerable

* Since this Work went to press, so far are the Magistrates of Edinburgh from adopting the sentiments of the Author, that upon a motion made by Bailie Jackson, in Council, they have *unanimously* resolved to make St. Andrew's Church a collegiate charge; and for that purpose, have, or are about to give a presentation to the Rev. Mr. Ritchie, Minister of Kilmarnock, a gentleman who has enjoyed his present living but a few weeks. Thus, an additional burthen is imposed on the City, without the smallest benefit accruing to the public. Can our rulers, civil or ecclesiastic, blame the people for visiting the Circus, or assembling in thousands on the Calton Hill?

† In the year 1661, the law which appropriates the funds for the ecclesiastical establishment, appoints that it shall be levied by the Deacons belonging to the different parishes.

importance, should meet with attention, or else a well regulated general corn-market would have been long ago established by the Magistrates, being a measure which would prove, if completed, of decided and general utility; they also would have devised some plan more effectual than the present, for lighting the streets of Edinburgh; for in many places of the City, there is not at present light sufficient to guide the pick-pocket or street-robber to his prey. But my task would be endless, were I to suggest all the good which might be done by *willing Magistrates*; and as I have no doubt but the present rulers are sufficiently well disposed, so I entertain the animating hope that they will give their fellow-citizens the satisfaction to see, that they have not only resolved to cease to do evil, but to learn to do well.

Matters of finance have been the principal subject which has been canvassed between the Magistrates and Mr. Smith: I shall now go along with the parties upon that subject, and endeavour to discover, if possible, where reform is necessary, and in what manner it may be effected.

I lay it down as a first principle, that all Magistrates are only Trustees or Administrators of the public revenue, and they are by no means entitled to divert any part of it from its original destination: hence their powers are limited, and wherever they transgress their powers, they are guilty of injustice. I am afraid in this respect, the conduct of the Magistrates of Edinburgh, for a long time past, will not bear a strict investigation. I shall not again notice what I have already observed, respecting the ecclesiastical funds, which to the extent of 3000*l.* and upwards, have been very improperly applied to the ordinary expenditure of the City; I shall only add upon that article, that it is no sufficient apology for misapplication, that for the ordinary expenditure the Magistrates need money. I likewise need money; but that gives me no title to possess myself of that which doth not belong to me,

But another article has attracted my attention, which has been long disgraceful to the administration of the City, and I am almost ashamed to mention it. There is a revenue, the average amount of which is, annually, about 400l. which arises from the entry-money paid at the admission of Burgeses. This fund is expressly, by the set of the City, appropriated as a provision for fallen back Burgeses, their children, and servants; and yet to that charitable purpose, not one shilling of it is applied. This is certainly inexcusable! How can that policy, or those measures prosper, which are supported by depriving of comfort, possibly even of sustenance, the man or family who once enjoyed better days, and perhaps was even in the Magistracy? The cry of their complaints ascends to the Parent of the Universe. The city rulers cannot surely hear it without reforming it; they must surely restore their rights to the indigent. Can these gentlemen sit down to feast at the public expence, can cheerfulness surround the social board, when every dish upon the luxurious table, every bottle of wine, shall be seen as if marked with this label: *This has been purloined from the scanty meal, and rent from the thin garment of fallen back Burgeses!* Rather than be a sharer in such a feast, I had rather be the fallen back burgeses, shivering under the winter storm, and pining emaciated for the want of food! Here, surely, the Magistrates will not delay a moment to reform; but if they should in the City of Edinburgh, famed for being charitable even to profusion, as every man is entitled to sift himself a party in the cause of the poor, I trust some good hearted man will step boldly forward in the cause of mercy, and restore the precious deposit to its righteous owners.

The next thing which has occurred to me, and upon which I cannot help animadverting, is the vote of aid, by which 2000l. were given to Government, which was called the *voluntary contribution*. Now, in my appre-

hension, it was beyond the powers of the Magistrates, being only administrators of funds not their own, to bestow any such gift upon any pretence whatever. But were we to allow that, as trustees, they had a right to give away the public property, yet they were not in their present circumstances, in justice, entitled to stretch out their hands and contribute a single shilling from the City funds, even to preserve the safety of the country; for, according to Mr. Smith's statements (and I have not perceived that he has been mistaken), their debt exceeds their capital, and their creditors alone could authorize them to be generous. As an evidence of this, Mr. Smith has stated, that they could not pay it till they sold the only stock they had remaining. There is not in this island a man more loyal than I am, or more disposed to do his utmost for the public safety, and the preservation of our invaluable rights; but if I took upon me to dispose of the property of another for that purpose, the deed would be unpardonable, because it would be unjust. But such has been, in the present instance, the generosity of the Magistrates of Edinburgh. The thing however is done, and I shall not animadvert farther upon it; but I hope our rulers will hereafter remember, that it is their duty to be just, before they shall indulge their generous propensities.

I have farther to state another thing which is expressly asserted in Mr. Smith's Address, in which the conduct of our Magistrates appears yet more extraordinary, and can scarcely be vindicated upon any just principles. Mr. Smith has stated, that the Magistrates have levied 1500*l.* annually from the inhabitants of the City, and that entirely by their own proper authority. From his account of it, it would seem that they are become conscious that they have acted illegally, as they now propose to obtain an act of Parliament, to authorize in future this exaction. It is the duty of every British subject, to be jealous in support of the constitutional

rights of the Community: now I am afraid the conduct of our Magistrates, must, even by the most moderate and candid, be considered as a violation of the laws of the country, a bold encroachment upon our most sacred rights; and I would fain persuade myself, that it has been some necessity bordering even upon distress, which could have so led them to venture upon a measure so hazardous. It is well known, that it is a fundamental law of our constitution, that the power of Parliament alone can levy contribution, or assess the community: no plea of necessity can militate against this its most valuable prerogative; it is the anchor by which we hold our liberty, our property, and lives; it is a right, to maintain which our forefathers have bled. *I hold war and all its glories in detestation*, but I would wield the sword of stern resistance against every power on earth, rather than suffer the dangerous invasion of this first security of all that as a people we possess, deprived of which we would soon become a country of slaves. I cannot conceive how the Magistrates of Edinburgh have so inconsiderately been induced to practise such invasion upon the properties of the inhabitants of this City, and for years too, have kept possession of the unlawful revenue.

The Romans had tribunes to watch their liberties against the inroads of consular and executive power. In this respect, every citizen of Edinburgh ought to become a tribune, and every Magistrate and Councillor should serve him in his office, and every right hearted inhabitant ought to unite to preserve this Constitution inviolate; but, in the present circumstances of the case, it is particularly necessary, in the first place, to guard against acts of Parliament surreptitiously obtained; and, for that purpose, our governors ought to make no application to Parliament for any thing in which the interests of the inhabitants are concerned, without having given three months previous notice, by pub-

lic advertisement ; in which should be specified the full and precise intention for which the application is intended to be made, that thus neither the will nor interests of the governors may be permitted to counteract the interests of the governed, or that, in any shape, their property should be affected without their consent.

The commencement of error leads naturally to the commission of farther wrongs. Encouraged by their success, in the manner above mentioned, the Magistrates of Edinburgh appear to have increased their revenue by further illegal exactions ; and accordingly they have nearly doubled the premiums payable on the admission of persons desiring to become burghesses of the City ; and this they have done, not only without any authority of law, but in express contradiction to the fundamental charter of the City ; which charter, with peculiar wisdom, attending to the different stations and circumstances of the people, has appointed what every class of men shall pay at their admission, and enjoined that no higher sums shall be exacted * ; so that the very law which constitutes their own existence ; which has incorporated the City of Edinburgh ; which directs that they shall be governed by their own Magistrates ; which is the foundation of every exclusive privilege they possess—this is the very law, the obligations of which they have set aside. And they have made themselves more than paramount to the Parliament of Great Britain : for they have taken upon themselves to dispose of the properties of the citizens according to their absolute will, without paying the least regard to their consent. Encouraged by this example, almost every incorporation in Edinburgh has entered into a combination amongst themselves, not to admit of apprentices for the freedom of the City, but at a greatly

* Set of the City, published by the Magistrates.

increased premium ; and they have augmented the dues upon them in every step of their progress, infomuch that a young man, having to struggle with all these exactions, is almost reduced to a state of beggary before he can commence business in the City. Now, I peremptorily insist that every such combination is illegal and oppressive, and every such exaction unjust.

An incorporation in itself is a species of monopoly, hurtful to the public ; for, in a manufacturing and commercial country, the capital, the knowledge, the talents, and even the very time of every individual, is a part of the public stock, and a source of the general prosperity. To prevent, therefore, or narrow their powers and opportunities of exertion, is a public injury, and ought to be permitted in no well regulated society ; and, instead of being allowed to add to the difficulties of young men commencing business in any line, by increasing the expence of their admission, if they have not patriotism sufficient to influence their conduct, they ought to be restrained by legal compulsion from exceeding the bounds of justice : and neither the higher nor inferior incorporations ought to be permitted to oppress the people, or infringe their rights.

When I have at any time seen an individual, or any body of men, grasping at money, stretching every nerve, taking every opportunity, and employing every engine for the acquisition of wealth, I have been naturally led to attend to the farther operations of this avaricious principle, and expected to find a general consistency of character, inducing them to preserve with as much earnestness the gain they have acquired, as they have manifested in attaining it. But the passion of avarice has appeared to me, in this case, very different in its operations, as it affects the conduct of the individual, than as it acts upon the community. With individuals in general, the attraction continues steady and

uniform, or becomes more vehement ; but there is evidently in the body politic a repelling power, which, the moment the touch of money is felt, occasions it to fly quickly off in every direction, though it is sure to find a cordial but unseen reception from many individuals.

It is however to be hoped, that the abundant anxiety which has been manifested by the Magistrates of Edinburgh, for the increase of the City revenue, has been purely patriotic, and their only object has been, that their powers of doing good might be enlarged, and the city be benefited by every shilling of their expenditure. The truth is, that, after giving the most minute attention to the different articles stated in the accounts of expenditure in the City, I think there are very few of them that even a captious mind could find fault with.*

I cannot however help observing, that a considerable saving may be made in a number of the articles ; and I must be excused in taking the liberty to point them out.

I have observed, in Mr. Smith's statement of ordinary expenditure, the sum of 2000*l.* mentioned as a debt upon the City, on account of the Agents before the Courts of Law. Now, I consider a litigious temper as troublesome, and even immoral, but, above all things, as highly indecent in a body politic, which is supposed to be actuated by no passion whatever ; and I am therefore afraid the litigation, which has been carried on at such enormous expence by the City

* It has been thought by some, that 160*l.* bestowed to defray the expence of Ambassadors, who were commissioned to obtain the translation of the two worthy Clergymen, who were lately introduced as Ministers into the City, has been rather a little extravagant, especially when the whole business might have been transacted equally well for five guineas ; but the general popular joy of the occasion is sufficient apology.

Others, more foolish, take upon them to think that the sum of about 500*l.* annually expended in public or political entertainments by the Magistrates, is ill bestowed ; but this is being contemptibly narrow minded.

of Edinburgh, cannot be entirely free from blame : every process, before it be commenced, ought to be carefully considered, lest it should be found only a job of some interested individual ; but, if that shall not be found to have been the case, there must certainly have been some extreme disorder and confusion in the management of the affairs of the City, which must either have exposed them to iniquitous demands, or deceived them so far, that they have been induced to engage in making iniquitous claims against others. Every precaution should be employed to prevent the designing from involving the City in unnecessary expence : and indeed I grudge every shilling that is bestowed in that way ; and I think I could venture to engage, that, upon a fair investigation, it would be found that the sums bestowed by the City of Edinburgh upon the gentlemen of the law, would be more than sufficient to have purchased all that they have acquired by litigation before the Courts, even though every particular should be valued at thirty years purchase. It will therefore be for the honour, as well as the advantage of the citizens, that some method should be adopted to bring such processes as are still depending, to a speedy conclusion, and to avoid them for the future ; *for no expenditure returns so little profit as that which is bestowed upon litigation.*

But farther, I have good reason to believe that a proper economy has not been observed in the management of the public works. It has been very publicly said (with what truth I shall not pretend to determine), that in every department the execution of these works has been converted into an interested job ; and people have not hesitated to say, that Deacons, Counsellors, and even the Chamberlain, or, what is the same thing, their political friends or dependents, have often been made sharers in the profit, which has been so purloined from the public. I give no atten-

tion to unauthenticated allegations ; but as such may take place, it is but right that, as far as may be, the possibility of collusive or unfair transactions should be prevented. No property, therefore, belonging to the community should be let or sold till after due advertisement shall have been made ; and no public work should be done in which the City has the smallest concern, but by contract ; and no contract ought to be entered into but in consequence of public advertisement ; and not only so, but the business ought to be decided upon publicly, at an hour and place appointed for the purpose, when every one who has made an offer may attend, and be satisfied that he has had justice done to him ; for no other plan can secure that the transaction shall be fairly concluded. Upon the articles of paving of the streets, the maintaining of the water pipes, the cleaning of the streets, the clothing of the City Guard, &c. and upon every other article of public work, I am decidedly of opinion there would be made a considerable saving, if this plan were to be steadily adopted ; for it has never been pursued in any instance, without affording experience of its propriety. It has been said, that instances of collusion have been frequent, and, if it is true, they are disgraceful ; but, at any rate, the conclusion is obvious, *that nothing which respects the revenue of the City, which can be transacted by public roup, ought to be concluded in private, or by private agreement.* This might indeed diminish the consequence of individuals, but it would greatly increase the revenues of the Town.

I have to observe still farther, that the revenues of the City are administered at an expence greatly beyond what is reasonable. I do not know, if even the Magistrates themselves are sensible, that this single article considerably exceeds 1500l. sterling annually ; and is *above ten per cent. of the whole of the revenue brought into their treasury.* It has appeared to me, that the Magistrates, in settling the

salaries of their different officers, have not been altogether directed by a sense of the importance of the labour required from them in their different offices, but have sacrificed a great deal to the dignity and consequential importance of the gentlemen employed to perform it. This, I apprehend, is a plan of settling those matters, not very convenient or economical ; and all I shall say farther upon this subject, is, that, in the present circumstances, where economy is so much needed, all these things should be reviewed, unnecessary offices ought to be abolished, and all unnecessary waste of public property carefully avoided, and instantly rectified where it has taken place.

But the most important object is yet before us. It has been stated by Mr. Smith, and allowed by all parties to be true, that the Magistrates have long been, and still are, in the use of borrowing money, upon the public credit, to a very considerable amount. Now, though I am not perfectly satisfied of the fact, yet in the present argument I shall admit, that all this money has been expended, for splendid and beneficial purposes, entirely suited to the dignity, the great and continually increasing prosperity, of the City of Edinburgh. But the more I consider the business, I am the less satisfied in my own mind respecting it, for the following questions continually recur upon me, which I cannot solve to my own satisfaction.

I wish first to be informed, by what authority the Magistrates, in their official capacity, have taken it upon them to borrow any money? Secondly, by what powers are they entitled to give security upon the funds of the City, for any debts which they have contracted? Thirdly, supposing them possessed of that power, and that they should think proper to borrow money upon it, and that the interest of it shall encroach upon the necessary yearly expenditure of the City, how is the business of the Town in that case to be

carried on? And, lastly, if they shall borrow money beyond the value of the subjects, which they are entitled to mortgage for its security, to what funds or subjects would the creditor be entitled to have recourse for security or payment? These, in my apprehension, are questions of a very serious nature, more important in their solution, to the interests of the Community, than any thing appertaining to the political contests of parties. Mr. Smith, though apparently oppressed with the weight of public affairs, gives us no light nor relief upon the subject; and the Magistrates would persuade us, that we need neither information nor relief, as they have more money than they know what to do with: but still the disagreeable impression remains upon my mind.

It may appear in the present state of things, a very strange question to ask, if the Magistrates of Edinburgh, in their official capacity, are empowered to borrow money. As a certain proportion of debt has rested upon the funds of the City, for more than a century, and the Magistrates have been in the use of diminishing, and increasing that debt, according as exigencies seemed to require, and prescription may thus have warranted their title to borrow, and may secure the creditors; yet still I am not satisfied, for I do not perceive that Magistrates who, in their official situation, have had committed to them as Trustees, the guardianship of the constitution, the privileges, and revenues of the incorporation over which they have been chosen to preside, can be entitled to infringe upon the settled constitution, alienate the privileges, or under any pretence, diminish the property intrusted to their management; or that they can sell, alienate, or mortgage any of those subjects which belong to the Community, and from which their revenue is derived. In support of this idea, in the book intituled the Set of the Borough, published by the au-

thority of the Magistrates, page 17th, I find these words ;
 “ THIS CITY IS RESTRAINED BY LAW, FROM CON-
 “ TRACTING ANY DEBT, UNLESS ITS ANNUAL REVENUE
 “ BE SUFFICIENT FOR ITS ANNUAL REGULAR EXPENCE,
 “ AND EVEN BE SUFFICIENT TO DEFRAY WHAT EX-
 “ PENCE MAY BE OCCASIONED BY CALAMITY OR AC-
 “ CIDENT ;” and these expressions, in the present case, I
 think decisive. But besides, a variety of subjects have been
 mortgaged to the City of Edinburgh, where the special purpose
 of the donation is expressly defined in the deed ; and when
 that is the case, it is not in the power of the Magistrates
to set aside the purpose, and retain the subject. Such, for
 example, are the subjects which have been appropriated to
 the ecclesiastical establishment, or to the relief of the poor ;
 such subjects they can certainly neither sell, nor subject to
 mortgage, for the security or payment of any debt ;
 and if I am not ill informed, there are few subjects
 from which the City derives any revenue, but what are
 under the same, or a similar predicament, and can therefore
 neither be wholly disposed of, nor their annual proceeds
 otherwise appropriated, than according to their original
 destination ; and if these things are justly stated, I would
 not wish to have much property depending upon such un-
 certain security. But whatever right the Magistrates pos-
 sess, they themselves appear suspicious of it, and accord-
 ingly we find, that they have never adventured to fund any
 particular debt, specially, upon any particular part of their
 revenue ; for they maintain their credit, under the belief,
 that their creditors are secured upon the whole of the City
 revenue : but whether they have a right to borrow, or give
 security upon the funds, I am far from thinking, that they
 were friends to the interests of the City, who first taught
 their Magistrates to anticipate their revenue, and to con-
 tract debt upon it ; nor are they friends to the City, who

continue the system with thoughtless extravagance. I never was of opinion, that the Community at large were indebted to him who first introduced the funding system into our Government, or to his successors, who have pursued the plan to the manifest hazard of public credit. But were I to set aside all this reasoning, and to suppose, that the whole debt, principal and interest, was a just burden upon the revenues of the City, yet, in that case, it must be at the same time allowed, that the Magistrates are equally well entitled to borrow 10,000*l.* as 1000*l.* Now, supposing they should think proper to borrow and expend money to the full extent of the value of the funds belonging to the City, so that the interest should exhaust the revenue; from what funds, in that case, or upon what plan could the police of the place be supported or carried forward? Or, if they should still continue the desperate plan of borrowing, to answer this exigence, and find people foolish enough to lend them, what security could they give to those creditors, either for their principal or interest? It is surely too extravagant to suppose, that they would attempt to continue this plan forever; they must stop somewhere; and upon such an event, what would be their refuge?

The creditors of the nation, have the whole property in Britain for their security; because the debt has been contracted by themselves through their representatives; but I hope the idea has never been sported even in imagination, that the individual property of the inhabitants of Edinburgh is pledged for payment of the debts contracted by their Magistrates, or that any set of men, however respectable, should be empowered to dispose at pleasure of the wealth of the City: for this would strike too deep to be tolerated; it would soon make Edinburgh become a desert, for each inhabitant would flee from it as a City of

destruction. It is, however, but too true, that for the relief of public credit (as I have already noticed), the Magistrates have by their own proper authority assessed the Community in the yearly sum of 1500*l.* which the inhabitants have paid for some time, without adverting to the nature of the dangerous precedent; and that they now intend, without giving any intimation to the inhabitants, to make application to Parliament, to have this assessment rendered perpetual; but though that measure has been at first very inconsiderately adopted, and been persevered in without thought, I should be very sorry to think that they meant by this, to let the inhabitants see, that they consider themselves entitled to apply their private properties, at their pleasure, for the relief of the public credit, or to liquidate the debt which they have contracted, or to shew them that it depends only upon them to settle amongst themselves the sum they may think needful, and to lay the plan upon which they intend it shall be levied, and then apply to Parliament for its sanction to their impositions, which they may hope of course will be obtained unnoticed. I have no concern with political parties or disputes in the City; but I take upon me to say, that under whatever pretence a scheme of this nature might be devised, it would be betraying the interests of the inhabitants; and, however much the Right Honourable Representative may find himself disposed to oblige his friends in the Council, yet as Representative of the Community, he would betray their interests if he should be prevailed upon to give countenance to a scheme so nefarious. And I am fully persuaded, that no consideration could induce him to give such a measure his countenance or support. I can without hesitation foretel, that if these shall ever become the views of our Magistrates, there will not be a guinea borrowed by them, but will be a prelude to some new imposition upon the

Town, and the Town Council will have annually to send up their budget to Parliament. But if such a system has occurred to them even in imagination, the inhabitants will do well to take care of themselves, and take timely measures to prevent their rulers from launching forth into schemes so ruinous; and every incorporation in the island, will do well to join in preventing the establishment of a precedent so hazardous. But I have not said that such a system has as yet been the object of their wish, much less have I said that it has been in their intention; it only appears to me necessary, that they be prevented from rushing heedlessly into such critical situations, as may force them upon a precipice.

I have been fatigued and disgusted with the trifling altercations amongst the parties, as to whether this or the other sum ought to be stated against the City as a debt, or whether one thousand or two thousand pounds, more or less, was to be put to the credit or debit of their funds. I consider even ten thousand pounds in that respect but of little consequence; but I will take the liberty, without disputing articles with any party, to state the situation of the revenue of the City, as it appears to me, in a point of view very different, and more interesting, than any which has been as yet laid before the public.*

To avoid all disputes, I shall, for argument's sake, allow the statement of the Magistrates to be unexceptionable; and, in the present question, admit, that the 73,000*l.* is

* I have taken no notice of the dispute between the Magistrates and Mr. Smith, relative to the light in which the 73,000*l.* funded upon the ale duty, or the 30,000*l.* owing on life annuities, ought to be considered, because no person can hesitate to determine in what relation these stand to the public debt; but, more especially, because it is totally unconnected with my argument, which proceeds upon undisputed statements and unquestionable principles.

no debt, because it is funded upon the ale duty; and I shall also state the annuities, according to their idea, in the ordinary expenditure; then the confessed debt of the City will be found to have stood at Martinmas 1798, thus:

On bond and promissory notes,	-	£. 29422	12	1
To bankers,	- - - - -	22686	0	9
Collectors of cefs,	- - - - -	1094	0	0
To agents,	- - - - -	2000	0	0
To banks, balance of money for meal for the poor,	- - - - -	1200	0	0

Mr. Smith has informed us, that before he left the Council, he had reason to believe it would increase, at Martinmas 1799, in the sum of - - - 6000 0 0

So that at Martinmas 1799, the real undisputed debt of the City would amount to - - - £. 62402 12 10

The account which has been given of the extent of the annual ordinary revenue of the City, *has not been controverted*, and amounts to £. 15926 : 3 : 6.

After deducting every article of expenditure from Mr. Smith's statement, which, the Magistrates have told us, ought to have been stated to the extraordinary expenditure, I find the sum total of the annual ordinary expenditure amounts to £. 20155 : 8 : 6

From this it appears, that the ordinary expenditure exceeds the ordinary revenue, the sum of - - - £. 4229 5 0

To which must be added the interest of debt owing (£. 62402 : 12 : 10) £. 3120 2 6

Carry over, £. 7349 7 6

Brought over,	£.	7349	7	6
From this deduct interest which was stated				
by Mr. Smith as a part of the expendi-				
ture	-	-	-	-
		£.	1288	16 5

And the total annual deficiency amounts

to	-	-	-	-
		£.	6060	11 1

But if there shall be subtracted from the revenue at present applied to the ordinary expenditure, 3000l. which belongs to the ecclesiastical establishment, 400l. belonging to the fallen-back burgesses, and 1500l. which is presently levied by the Magistrates under their own proper authority alone, none of which sums they have any title to employ in the ordinary disbursements of the City, the total annual deficiency will be found to amount to £. 10960 : 11 : 1.

And for the payment of this sum, the City has no funds *whatsoever*. They cannot mortgage a single article of those funds from which their ordinary revenue arises, to give security for one shilling of their debt; for every article of the ordinary expenditure, which has been stated against it, is absolutely and indispensably necessary. The life annuities must be paid; the clergy must have their stipends; the Lord Provost and clerks their salaries; the cefs, and feus, and tradesmen's accounts, must be paid; the streets must be paved, lighted, and kept clean; in short there is not an article of the expenditure, but is indispensable (though admitting of an improved management), and I again repeat, *that there is no property upon which the debt can be secured, nor a single shilling borrowed to pay the yearly balance against the ordinary revenue above stated*; so that I am afraid the very crisis, which I mentioned a little ago, is already come, and that Parliament alone can set matters to rights, not only by assessing the properties of the inhabitants to

the extent of the debt; but also, to provide for the annual payment of the sum by which the expenditure already exceeds the receipts of the City.

I am not yet informed how far the inhabitants will find themselves disposed to submit to a tax of that magnitude, or will think themselves indebted to any administration which has reduced them to that predicament; but I cannot help thinking, that these are serious statements, and infinitely more interesting than the jargon of contending parties*.

It will be noticed that I have paid no attention to the extraordinary expenditure or receipts of the City. I have found them nearly balanced, or rather that, upon an average of years, the balance has been considerably against the City, and has contributed to the increase of their debt. But I thought it needless, by investigating the matter too minutely, to increase the present gloom; for I have only stated facts and articles which stand uncontroverted by either party; and I wish it were as easy for me to point out the means of relief, as it has been to show the weight of the burthen. I am apprehensive, that when Mr. Smith first published his Address, though he saw that things were in extreme confusion, he by no means was sensible of the depth of the evil; and the Magistrates are so sensible of the justice of the old

* I am perfectly persuaded, that there is no people in the world more disposed to come forward in aid of the public necessities, whether they may respect the Community at large, or this City in particular, than are the inhabitants of Edinburgh; but I have too high an opinion of our Magistrates to believe they would attempt to relieve the pressure of present circumstances improperly; and I am at the same time decidedly persuaded, that the good sense of the inhabitants, and their attachment to constitutional principles, will never suffer them to be prevailed upon, from any possible considerations, to submit to unconstitutional requisitions; neither do I think their circumstances can admit of the imposition of additional taxes to the extent of 10,000l. yearly, to fulfil the demands of the ordinary yearly expenditure, nor even of 6000l. which is the lowest statement of the present deficiency.

saying, *That sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*, that they rather seem inclined to shut their eyes, than to contemplate an object so exceedingly alarming. But the inhabitants of Edinburgh, and even the Magistrates themselves, may rest assured, that debts are like crimes; the day of discovery and retribution will come, *unless prevented by a solid system of Reform.*

I cannot devise a reason why the Magistrates, who are the guardians of the interests of the community, should have allowed the affairs of the City to go into such extreme disorder, and that they could have been induced, from any possible considerations, to have borrowed such immense sums, and contracted debts without ever having given themselves the trouble to think of any plan upon which they might be repaid,—which has been so inconsistent with their good sense. The only possible apology for them, which has occurred to me, has been, that the books of the City contained no distinct state of their affairs, and have, in fact, been kept in such confusion, that it became wholly impossible for them to form a clear judgment of the actual situation of the City revenue; but if this has been their apology for a conduct so inconsiderate, they could not possibly have given one less satisfactory, or one the justice of which the public will be so little disposed to allow.

I am persuaded, that many years have passed since the inhabitants of Edinburgh have met with any thing which has so justly and greatly excited their surprise, as the information which has been stated in Mr. Smith's Address. He has informed the public that he had conversed with several gentlemen, who were in office at the time, and also with others who had formerly filled offices in the Magistracy, who all declared to him, "That they did not know whether or not the City kept any books*:" He has said farther, from the

* Address, p. 5.

authority of the Chamberlain, that the cash book, which is laid weekly upon the Council table for general inspection, was not intended to be understood, and in fact was so constructed, that it was not possible it should be understood by any of the Council, or even by the Chamberlain himself*; and, finally, he has declared, that Mr. Hay had informed him, that neither the Lord Provost, nor Mr. Gray, nor the Chamberlain, nor even Mr. Buchan †, who had been thirty years Chamberlain of the City, and had the whole revenue and expenditure passing through his hands, nor one of these gentlemen knew any thing of the actual situation of the revenues of the City‡; so that Citizen General Bonaparte might have as reasonably expected to have received from the Beglerbegs, a rational and systematic information concerning the police and revenues of Egypt, when he convoked a convention at Alexandria, as any man could expect from the Magistrates satisfactory information of the state of the affairs of Edinburgh.

Mr. Smith was thunderstruck when he received all this information; and I am persuaded, it must have given equal surprise to all thinking and intelligent men; and I should not wonder, if they had been most seriously alarmed, when, in consequence of this confusion, they found a *difference* of no less than the sum of 106,928l. 14s. 8d. in the accounts of the debts of the City, as stated on the one hand by the Magistrates, and on the other by Mr. Smith, in their several publications.

* Address, p. 6.

† Mr. Buchan, at leaving his office, appeared upon the face of his accounts, to be indebted to the City in about 30,000l. If he had died before the business was unravelled, his family must have been greatly injured, if not ruined. He was in fact, not indebted to the City; but such was the state of their books.

‡ Address, p. 8.

The Magistrates of Edinburgh have surely always been what they at present are, gentlemen raised to eminent office on account of their superior abilities, and they have been generally merchants, or at least been educated in a mercantile line. Now I can scarcely conceive any thing more unaccountable, than that it should never have occurred to gentlemen of that description, *endowed with a public trust*, even for one moment, to have attended to the manner in which the business of the City has been transacted or recorded, or to have inquired whether they had books, or whether those books had been kept upon a plan capable of discovering the real state of their affairs. In their own business they certainly were expert, and had always found the advantage of regularity, perspicuity, and exactness, and yet the affairs of the City, notwithstanding their variety and magnitude, have been permitted by them to fall into such confusion, as to have become unintelligible. It appears to have arisen from a sense of this, that Mr. Smith has been so anxious to point out to the Magistrates the necessity of putting the affairs of the City under some regular system in all departments, more especially, that the books containing the cash transactions, shall be kept with methodical precision. Now, I cannot see a reason why the Magistrates should be on that account, so very much displeased with him as they appear to have been; for it could not be construed into any impeachment of them, when it has been said, that the plan pursued in the City business, for these hundred years past, was bad and imperfect, and the present Magistrates could have no concern in what was transacted so long before they were in existence; the only fault which can possibly attach to them, would be, if, after the defects or imperfection in the ancient system have been clearly demonstrated, they should *continue it against conviction*, which cannot certainly be supposed. What though the discovery has ori-

ated with Mr. Smith? Even a fool may give wise men a good counsel; and there can be no prudence in refusing a good natured attention to any advice, whether it be good or bad. The Magistrates have intimated, that they will not suffer themselves to be compelled upon the business, and that Mr. Smith's own conduct furnishes them good reasons against precipitancy: he took time to deliberate; he took four years to consider, and after all, only unveiled the mischief, without having suggested any method by which the disorders might be remedied; and, therefore, his example could be no reason why they should be hurried upon untried experiments. But the Magistrates seem not to have understood Mr. Smith; for it does not appear that it was from any doubt either of the necessity or of the facility of the measure, that Mr. Smith was induced to delay the disclosure but plainly because he thought he had not sufficient influence to effect any reform, and because he was afraid that he would lose his place in the Magistracy, if he should interfere with the cabalistical secret: and it seems he is judged right; *for his fears have fallen upon him*; and I am afraid this his scheme of reform has been the great reason why he is not at this very day a Magistrate. But as the matter now stands, the thing is unavoidable. Mr. Smith has brought forth with him the secret from the sanctuary, and the people of Edinburgh are convinced that there have been dangerous errors in the revenue department, which have in some measure occasioned the immense load of debt under which the public finances are oppressed; and the yet more formidable yearly balance against the ordinary revenues of the City. The inhabitants expect, and call upon their Magistrates for a change of system. As therefore they value the honour of their name, and the opinion of their fellow citizens, they will, without delay, commence and carry forward the important business, the accomplish-

ment of which would at once redound to their own honour and the good of the City. When that event shall take place, all things being without disguise, every person having interest will be enabled to know how matters stand between the City and its creditors, between their receipts and the expenditure; and will be happy to see their Magistrates standing upon good and sure ground when they shall attempt to redeem the City.

I confess I felt myself not a little alarmed when I heard the Magistrates, in their publication by authority, state that they do not admit that there are abuses.* This is indeed almost to cut off the City of Edinburgh from hope; but the expression must have been unguarded.—Will the Magistrates indeed say to their constituents, that it is no abuse that their City books are unintelligible—is it no abuse that the cash-book is so conducted as not to be intended to be understood—is it no abuse that they have no rental of their fees and duties—is it no abuse that their arrears should be permitted to amount at Martinmas 1798, to the sum of 8442l. 5s. 6d. and to be allowed continually to increase—is it no abuse that there are no checks upon their officers or clerks—is it no abuse that such immense debts have been contracted without regard to the want of funds for repayment—is it no abuse that the ecclesiastical revenues, and the funds appropriated to the poor, have been misapplied—is it no abuse that 1500l. should have been levied from the City without legal authority—and, finally, is it no abuse that they feel ignorant of the extent of their expenditure, in proportion to the deficiency of their receipts? The abuses as they have been exhibited, and verified, or admitted, in the different publications which have been laid before the Community, are great indeed; and I have not magnified nor set down anything in malice. I have had nothing farther to do than to bring

* Magistrates Answer, p. 12.

them together into one view ; and my purpose has been for the public good. I will take the liberty to say in the conclusion, that honest men in Edinburgh expect no longer to be amused with political disputes, no more to be told that there have been no abuses. They lay the blame nowhere ; but they expect and hope, that their present most respectable Magistrates, will, without loss of time, diligently, and effectually apply themselves to relieve the public mind, disclose the extent of every evil, and apply the remedy, where remedy is practicable. It will be then, and then only, they will meet the approbation, and secure the confidence of their fellow citizens, which they surely reckon it their highest honour to deserve.

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